

# APPARITIONS, WITCHCRAFT, &c.

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## THE APPARITION; OR THE *THREE BLACK SPOTS.* A POLISH STORY.

(Translated from the Latin of Lutomersko.)

AS I am about the subject of apparitions, it may not be deemed altogether impertinent, if I relate a story which is said to have happened in the family from which I am descended, in the maternal line. I shall relate it as nearly in the words of my father, who used to relate it as often as the subject of ghosts and spirits became the subject of conversation. I know it is immediately believed in Niesewies, the country where it is said to have happened. Poetrkonja possessed an immense estate, in the 15th century, in the province I have just named. He was a man of high military tone, and had often led his countrymen into the field against the Tartars, a barbarous and blood-thirsty race. Having reaped sufficient laurels in the tented field, he found, on inquiring into his years, that he was very near the meridian of life, and that it was time he should enjoy those amusements which the country afforded. Having been bred in a camp from his youth, it was not to be expected that he could assume the pliant manners of the courtier, or that he could accommodate himself to the manners of those who might think themselves above him, because they could make a genteeler bow, or unblushingly lend a lie the confidence of truth.

There was a fine old castle, erected by one of his ancestors, on the banks of a river that ran through his estate. His first care, on his return, was to repair this venerable pile, which cost him a considerable sum, especially in glass,

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which was very dear in those days, and could be only procured in Venice. The situation around was charming; for, nature had laid it out to the best advantage, and perhaps it was the fairest spot in all her wide domain. There was still something wanting to complete his happiness in this Eden---a wife. His wealth in land and horses, the number of his slaves, his fame as a soldier, and, above all, his illustrious descent, could not fail to plead in his favour with any lady to whom he paid his addresses; and it was not long ere he found a mistress in a lady of exquisite beauty, of high birth, and something of a romantic turn of mind. After every thing had been settled to the satisfaction of her parents, they were united in matrimony. This lady brought him two children, a son and a daughter. The father wished to inspire the heir-apparent of his house with those military sentiments which glowed in his own bosom. He would sometimes relate to him the glorious exploits of his countrymen; the last words that trembled on their tongue, when the unerring javelin pierced their breast. He would then lead him into a lofty room, where the branches of a large genealogical tree spread themselves along the walls, on which he used to trace what he called the paths of glory; and, as often as he came to any that were prodigal of life, he used to dwell on their deeds with an enthusiasm that bordered on madness. The son, however, did not evince any great disposition to tread in those paths; he preferred those that led to scenes of a very different nature; the repose of mankind, and the happiness of those who lived about him. His delight was to superintend the erection of cottages for the peasants; to tame the animals that wandered wild through the woods; and to protect the innocent from the gripe of oppression. It is not difficult to anticipate such opposite dispositions in father and son. The former having banished the latter, as unworthy of his BLOOD; for, birth, to the old man, was every thing: it was in his opinion the real distinction betwixt man and man; it supplied the want of all virtues and talents, and could not be supplied by all the virtues and talents in the world.



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world. Endued with this opinion, which, however, was the reigning one in his day ; he carried it to such a foolish height, that he would not permit any one to attend him in the chase, that could not boast of being descended of some ancient house. He despised, besides, all learning, as unworthy of a nobleman, and only calculated to cherish false pride, and novelties in rank and manners.

As he had now divested himself of all the feelings of a father for a son, and his only son, his attention was entirely directed to his daughter, a beautiful girl of an amiable disposition. She had now accomplished the sixteenth year of her age. The lily and the rose contended for the empire of her cheek ; whilst her long auburn hair flowed like a gentle streamlet on a neck fairer than the snow that falls on the southern plains of Poland. Her mother, who was a woman of good sense, was resolved that so fair an outside should be tenanted by a mind worthy of the habitation ; she knew that those roses and lilies would fade ; that those silken locks, which sported in every gale, would turn grey ; and that those eyes, which rivalled the blue of heaven, would sink into dimness : she knew that love, beauty, and youth, fly off together ; and that the mind can only preserve the triumphs which these transitory charms have obtained. The mother, therefore, unknown to the father, had the daughter instructed in all those arts that embellish the female mind. She read the best books on the best subjects ; and, as she had an excellent memory and a refined taste, I may venture to say, that she would have shone with distinction in some of the first circles, even in our days.

It happened, much about this time, that a young man, of the name of Lasey, missed his way in a wood adjoining the castle ; he had wandered up and down on a cold, frosty, night, alarmed with the howlings of wolves, and the hungry growlings of bears. Overcome at length by fatigue, he threw himself on the bank of a stream, where he was found the next morning, almost frozen to death, by an old peasant, who conducted him

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to his cottage, placed him within a due distance of the fire, chafed his hands and legs, and administered such cordials as the hut afforded; which, at length, brought him back to life.

It chanced, on the Sunday, that the peasant was sent for by Elisabeth, for that was the young lady's name; and, as she wished to converse with persons of his class, when her father was not in the way, she asked him several questions, and amongst the rest, what kept him so long after she had sent for him. He told her, that as he was passing through the wood, on his way to the castle, he came up to a young man stretched on a bank, and almost frozen to death; that he carried him to his cottage, and after some time was happy enough to bring him to life.

He also added, that he was convinced the young man was a person of rank, from his dress and manners, and that he was besides one of the finest figures he had ever seen. Elisabeth shook the old man by the hand, and assured him that his humanity should not go unrewarded. Her curiosity was raised to see the stranger, who was likely to remain some time at the peasant's, as the snowy season had set in. The imagination of a woman is fertile; and in the evening, when her father was engaged with some friends over the bottle, she framed an excuse in her own mind to visit the peasant's. On her entrance she was struck with the air and appearance of the stranger. It may be said, that the contrast of the sons of the cottage would, in a certain degree, contribute to enhance the impression; but this was not the case; for, Lasey would have shone to the same advantage in the first circle: he was so finely formed, that he was called the favourite of nature in his own part of the country; and, added to this, he was the most accomplished young man of his day: he had travelled through France and Germany, and had fought, when he was seventeen years of age, under the banners of the great Potoki. After this, I think, it will be needless to make any apology for the mutual passion of this youthful pair. They seemed to be formed by nature for each other; but prejudice and fortune were inseparable barriers to the union of hands.



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hands. The young man was descended, it is true, of a good family, but all his genealogy would not have formed a twig of the wide branching tree of the house of the proud Poctrkonian. Love, however, so far favoured their illusive hopes, that they saw each other once a week. Those precious moments were usually spent in vows and protestations of eternal love. One evening, however, Lasey summoned up resolution enough to consult her as to a plan, which he had formed that morning; as the war was at that time raging between the Turks and the Hungarians, he proposed to enter into the service of the latter, under the command of General Silizeo. "If, said he, I should perform some great exploit, it may reach your father's ears, and the obscurity of my birth may be lost in the rays of my glory. If so, my sword will be sufficient wealth in the sight of your father; and he may then voluntarily confer that inestimable gem on me, which in my present state I dare not solicit. Elisabeth, after much ado, consented to this proposition; and, in order to soften the pangs of absence, it was agreed, that they should correspond with each other under feigned names, as often as they could. Lasey proposed another condition, which was, that his absence should not exceed three years; and that, if either of them should die in that period, the departed spirit should visit the living. This was mutually agreed to. Lasey had been absent about a year, in which time Elisabeth heard from him twice. In that period he had performed prodigies of valour, and as often as he blazed in the van of battle, victory was sure to perch upon his standard. Another tedious year had now elapsed, not a word from Lasey. Intelligence, at length, arrived that he had fallen in the ardour of pursuing the enemy. One of the wealthiest heads of Poland brought this sad intelligence to the castle. The effect which it had on Elisabeth's mind cannot be expressed. The noble messenger, however, ran out in praise of Lasey, and this circumstance endeared him to Elisabeth. As this lord was to pass some time at the castle, the proud Poctrkonian thought it would be a good opportunity to bring about a marriage between him and

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his daughter. The nobleman soon consented, and the lady was obliged to consent; for the father was a tyrant from disposition, and his will was his law. As Elisabeth was one night in bed, and the candle burning on a chair beside her, when all was still, Lasey entered her chamber, dressed as when he left her, with a smile on his countenance; she waved her hand, lest her husband should awake. Lasey, in a low tone of voice, assured her there was no danger, that he only came to fulfil his promise, and that she might banish all fear. She raised herself in the bed, and wished to embrace him, but he told her that was not permitted: she then wished to know if she might sooth herself with the hope of enjoying his company in the world of spirits: he told her he was not permitted to answer any questions. He acquainted her that her husband would die in a short time, that she would live to an old age, and that she would die on a certain day, which he named, and which I cannot recollect. She then said, "How do I know but all this is an illusion? how shall I know that it is but a dream?" He then desired her to stretch forth her arm, which she did: he then impressed it on three different places with the tip of his finger and vanished. When she wakened the next morning, she found three black spots on it. Her husband accordingly died on the day predicted; she never married again; she lived to an old age, and died the day the ghost told her; for she inscribed it the next morning in a book.

Thus I have detailed this story circumstantially, as I have heard it related different ways: "but my father," said he, "heard it from those, who had the best means of knowing;" and, of course, I have given it nearly in his own words.

**BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS** of the celebrated MAID OF ORLEANS, sacrificed to ignorance and superstition, and condemned to be burnt as a WITCH, a worshipper of the DEVIL, &c.

JOAN OF ARC, known by the name of the Maid of Orleans, who, by her bravery and enthusiasm, had so much



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much contributed to revive the courage of the French, and had struck such terror into the hearts of the English, threw herself into Campagne, when the English and Burgundians besieged it. She was taken prisoner in a sally which she made at the head of 600 men. The joy of the beseigers cannot be expressed at having in their power this girl of 18 years of age, whose name alone for more than a year had made them tremble. The victories of Cressy, Poitiers, and Agincourt, had never excited such transports. The Duke of Bedford himself ordered public rejoicings at Paris, preceded by a Te Deum, by way of thanksgiving.

She was at first imprisoned in the fortress of Beaulieu; afterwards in that of Beaurevoir; then in the castle of Crotoy; and at last she was carried to Rouen, where she was condemned to perish in the flames, and was accordingly burnt. Just after she was taken, Brother Martin, vicar general of the inquisition in France, (an office now happily forgotten, together with the bloody tribunal to which it owed its origin,) demanded the prisoner from the military power, as being vehemently suspected of many crimes amounting to heresy; crimes which could not be overlooked without ample and sufficient reparation. The university exhibited upon this occasion the most base and abject prostitution, by soliciting the English to deliver Joan up to the Inquisition, and requesting them to take care she did not escape the justice of the church. Peter Cauchon, bishop of Beauvais, as her metropolitan, demanded the right of condemning her. He applied for that purpose to the university, to the inquisitor, to the Duke of Burgundy, to the King of England; and did not give over his application till she was delivered to him. The archbishopric of Rouen being then vacant, the chapter lent its jurisdiction to the bishop of Beauvais; that is, he was allowed to act as judge in that diocese.

Nothing could be more severe, more violent, and more cruel, than the manner in which that unworthy prelate and his unjust assessors treated Joan in the course of this process; all of it was alike inconsistent with justice, honour,

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nour, decency, modesty, and good faith. This ecclesiastical tribunal condemned her as being relapsed, excommunicated, rejected from the bosom of the church, and for her crimes judged worthy to be given up to the secular power. Such was the form used in the decrees of the inquisition. This tribunal, when it condemned its victims, did not put them to death. The church abhors blood; but those whom it condemned were infallibly burnt by the lay-officers. This was the fate of Joan of Arc. The bailif of Rouen and his assistants, who were sent for to represent the secular arm, did not pronounce the sentence; they only said, "Take her away." Near the stake was a picture, on which was this inscription: 'Joan, commonly called la Pucelle; a liar, dangerous, and abuser of the people; a witch, superstitious, a blasphemer of God, presumptuous; an unbeliever in Jesus Christ, a murderess, cruel, dissolute, a worshipper of the devil, an apostate, a schismatic, and a heretic.'

Such was the tragical end of a heroine, who could not be charged with any atrocious crime; at least with any that could be deemed worthy to be expiated by fire: such as appearing in men's clothes and bearing arms; boasting that she had apparitions, or visions, which disclosed to her future events; and having carried her zeal for the service of her king to a degree of fanaticism and enthusiasm, which made her capable of performing prodigies of valour. Her amazing exploits made her pass for a sorceress in that age of ignorance, when every thing extraordinary was ascribed to the intervention of the devil. She was burnt not so much to expiate her own great and real crimes, as to satisfy the spite and hatred of the English, whose measures she had confounded. The judges who condemned her were French, but the subjects of England. This was an artifice of the Duke of Bedford and the English ministry, whose policy endeavoured to throw on the French nation, the disgrace of such a manifest piece of injustice. They themselves sacrificed Pucelle, as her destruction turned to their advantage; but they



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they made choice of the French for the instruments of their vengeance.

### *Proofs of spirits and apparitions in the Isle of Man, from Waldron's Survey, folio, 1729.*

I have heard many of them protest, says this writer, they have been carried insensibly great distances from home; and, without knowing how they came there, found themselves on the top of a mountain. One story, in particular, was told me of a man who had been led by invisible musicians for several miles together; and, not being able to resist the harmony, followed till it conducted him to a large common, where a great number of little people were sitting round a table, and eating and drinking in a very jovial manner: among them were some faces whom he thought he had formerly seen, but forbore taking any notice, or they of him; till the little people offering him drink, one of them, whose features seemed not unknown to him, plucked him by the coat, and forbid him, whatever he did, to taste any thing he saw before him; for, if you do, added he, you will be as I am, and return no more to your family. The poor man was much affrighted, but resolved to obey the injunction: accordingly a large silver cup filled with some sort of liquor, being put into his hand, he found an opportunity to throw what it contained on the ground. Soon after the music ceasing, all the company disappeared, leaving the cup in his hand; and he returned home, though much wearied and fatigued. He went the next day, and communicated to the minister of the parish all that had happened, and asked his advice how he should dispose of the cup: to which the clergyman replied, that he could do no better than to go to the top of the common, and bury the cup in the ground, and take no notice to any body, but return after a short time, and see if it was there still. The man did as he was directed; but, when he went a second time,

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time, the cup was removed, and the grass was carefully replaced.

Another instance they gave me to prove the reality of spirits, was of a fiddler, who agreed with a person, who was a stranger, for so much money, to play to some company he should bring him to, all the twelve days of Christmas, and received earnest for it, saw his new master vanish into the earth, the moment he had made the bargain. None could be more terrified than was the poor fiddler; he found he had entered himself into the devil's service, and looked on himself as already damned; but, having recourse also to a clergyman, he received some hope: he ordered him, however, as he had taken the earnest, to go when he should be called; but, that whatever tunes should be called for, to play none but psalms. On the day appointed, the same person appeared, with whom he went, though with what inward reluctance is easy to guess; but, punctually obeying the minister's directions, the company to whom he played were so angry, that they all vanished at once, leaving him at the top of a high hill, and so bruised and hurt, though he was not sensible when, or from what hand he received the blows, that he got not home without the utmost difficulty.

Nothing can be more distressing than for parents to lose their children, or have them changed; yet the following facts are established upon such credit, that mothers are in continual terror at the thoughts of it. I was prevailed upon myself, to go and see a child; who, they told me, was one of these changelings; and, indeed, I must own, I was not a little surprized, as well as shocked, at the sight: nothing under heaven could have a more beautiful face; but, though between five and six years old, and seemingly healthy, he was so far from being able to walk, or stand, that he could not so much as move any one joint; his limbs were vastly long, for his age, but smaller than an infant's of six months; his complexion was perfectly delicate, and he had the finest hair in the



world; he never spoken or cried; eat scarcely any thing; and was very seldom seen to smile; but, if any one called him fairy-elf, he would frown, and fix his eyes so earnestly on those who said he was, as if he would look them through. His mother, or at least, his supposed mother, being very poor, frequently went out a charring, and left him a whole day together. The neighbours, out of curiosity, have often looked in at the window to see how he behaved when alone; which, whenever they did, they were sure to find him laughing, and in the utmost delight. This made them judge that he was not without company more pleasing to him than any mortal's could be; and what made this conjecture seem the more reasonable was, that if he were left ever so dirty, the woman, at her return, saw him with a clean face, and his hair combed with the utmost exactness and nicety.

A second account of this nature I received from a creditable woman, whose offspring seem to have been devoted to the power of spirits. The fourth or fifth night after she was delivered of her first child, the family were alarmed with a most terrible cry of fire: upon which, every body run out of the house to see whence it proceeded; not excepting the nurse; who, being much frightened like the others, made one of the number. The poor woman lay trembling in her bed alone, unable to help herself; and, her back being turned to the infant, saw not that it was taken away by an invisible hand. Those who had left her, having inquired about the neighbourhood, and finding there was no cause for the outcry they had heard, laughed at each other for the mistake; but, as they were going to re-enter the house, the poor babe lay on the threshold; and, by its cries, preserved itself from being trodden upon. This exceedingly amazed all that saw it; and, the mother being still in bed, they could ascribe no reason for finding it there, but having been removed by fairies; who, by their sudden return, had been prevented carrying it any farther.

About a year after, the same woman was brought to bed of a second child, which had not been born many  
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nights, before a great noise was heard in the house where they kept their cattle. (For, in this island, where there is no shelter in the fields from the excessive cold and damps, they put all their milch-kine into a barn, which they call a cattle-house.) Every one that was stirring ran to see what was the matter, believing that the cows had gotten loose: the nurse was as ready as the rest; but, finding all safe, and the barn-door close, immediately returned, but not so suddenly but that the new-born babe was taken out of the bed, as the former had been, and dropt, on their coming, in the middle of the entry. This was enough to prove the fairies had made a second attempt; and the parents, sending for a minister, joined with him in thanksgiving to God, who had twice delivered their children from being taken from them.

But, in the time of her third lying-in, every one seemed to have forgot what had happened in the first and second; and, on a noise in the cattle-house, ran out to know what had occasioned it. The nurse was the only person, excepting the woman in the straw, who stayed in the house; nor was she detained through care, or want of curiosity, but by the bonds of sleep, having drunk a little too plentifully the preceding day. The mother, who was broad awake, saw her child lifted out of the bed, and carried out of the chamber, though she could not see any person touch it; on which she cried out as loud as she could, "Nurse, nurse! my child, my child is taken away." But the old woman was too fast, to be awakened by the noise she made, and the infant was irretrievably gone. When her husband, and those who had accompanied him, returned, they found her wringing her hands, and uttering the most piteous lamentations for the loss of her child: on which, said the husband, looking into the bed, "The woman is mad! do not you see the child lies by you?" On which, she turned, and saw indeed something like a child, but far different from her own, who was a beautiful, fat, well-featured, babe; whereas, what was now in the room of it, was a poor, lean, withered, deformed,